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SUBJECT: RALLY IN ISTANBUL AGAINST MILITARY AND JUDICIAL
INTERVENTION

11. (U) On June 21 a reported 20,000 people gathered on Istiklal Boulevard to protest anti-democratic practices in Turkey. The march, called "70 Million Steps against Coups," was widely publicized in ads sponsored by the Young Civilians (Genc Siviller) in the major daily papers. The event, which had not been approved in advance by the local authorities, did not draw a significant police response. The event was planned in cooperation with a diverse group of left-of-center NGOs including the Global Action Group, the Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed Peoples, Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism, Lamda, and the Movement for Political Horizons. Considerable support was also drawn from the Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP). Supporters of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) were apparently absent from the demonstration. A statement read during the rally said civilians and NGOs had gathered in opposition to the military's alleged influence in the Constitutional Court's recent overruling of the headscarf amendment and anticipated closure of the AKP and DTP.

12. (U) The demonstration received relatively limited media coverage, although commentary tended to be polarized. Bulent Kenes, editor of the Islamist-leaning Today's Zaman, wrote that the march represented "a flare that shows that any sort of army-oriented, anti-democratic intervention, in whatever guise it may take, will no longer go unanswered." The ultra-nationalistic Tercuman carried the more radical headline "Those Opposed to Nationalism Take to the Streets," questioning the demonstrators' loyalty to the state.

13. (SBU) COMMENT: The AKP's decision to stay away from the march signals their reluctance to be associated with acts that the Turkish military and judiciary might construe as destabilizing and could potentially be used as fodder in the on-going closure case. END COMMENT
WIENER